When the increase of shipping facilities was becoming more and more a matter of life and death to the nation and its Allies, these removable delays were intolerable. Up to the present, they had been met by facile and fatalist predictions that we could carry on for a few more months and no longer. The new Government felt it must cleave a way through all these difficulties and that it could be done. There were serious obstacles but they must be overcome. The congestion problem is an illustration of the nature of the difficulties and of the way they were gradually removed.

Firm action

Government

Proposals of Conservative

A Committee appointed

On 31st January, 1917, the Shipping Controller submitted to the War Cabinet a memorandum respecting delays at certain ports in unloading cargoes. It was suggested that if the railways could handle the cargoes more expeditiously, the ships would be "turned round" more speedily, and the result would be an estimated saving in tonnage of 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 tons per annum. At the instance of Sir Albert Stanley an Inter-Departmental Committee composed of representatives of the Shipping Controller, Ministry of Munitions and Board of Trade, was set up to investigate and report what steps, if any, could be taken which would secure the quicker unloading of the ships.

This Committee produced a first Summary Report on 16th February, 1917, suggesting a series of drastic measures.

The Report of the Committee was considered by the War Cabinet on igth February, and the following